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ABSTRACT

The federal Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program provides incentives for high-poverty schools to pursue reform. In fiscal years 1998-99, $120 million, or 83 percent of total CSRD funds, was made available to states to target Title I schools serving disadvantaged students. Of the 1,748 schools participating in CSRD, over 85 percent received Title I funds and almost two thirds were Title I Schoolwide Program grantees. It has been suggested that rural school participation in CSRD may be hampered by such barriers as geographic isolation and lack of staff. This paper examines the distribution of CSRD funds across the rural-urban continuum, both overall and for high-poverty schools (schools with 50% or more of their students participating in the free and reduced lunch program). Data were drawn from a database on school participation in CSRD, and the rural-urban location of schools was based on the Johnson Locale Codes used by the U.S. Department of Education. The data indicate that: (1) rural high-poverty schools were funded by CSRD at a slightly lower rate than total rural schools; (2) students in rural high-poverty schools were served at a slightly higher rate than students in total rural schools; (3) the largest CSRD grants went to urban schools due to their larger size; and (4) compared to urban schools, rural schools funded by CSRD had fewer students but more money per student to implement reform. Appendices outline issues related to rural school participation in CSRD and define the Johnson Codes. (SV)

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Participation of Rural Schools in Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program: What Do We Know?

Sarah Dewees
AEL, Inc.

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Rural Laboratory Network Program

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Major Findings

1. The data presented in this study suggest that rural high poverty *schools* (schools with 50% or more of their students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch) appear to be funded by the CSRD program at a slightly lower rate than the rural proportion of all schools (see Figure 1).

2. The data presented in this study suggest that *students* in rural high poverty schools (schools with 50% or more of their students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch) appear to be served at a slightly higher rate than the rural proportion of all students (see Figure 2).

3. The data presented in this study suggest that the largest CSRD grants are more likely to go to urban schools, and this appears to be due to the larger school sizes in urban areas (see Figures 3 and 4).

4. The data presented in this study suggest that rural schools funded by the CSRD program tend to have fewer students than urban schools (see Figure 4).

5. The data presented in this study suggest that rural schools funded by the CSRD program tend to have more money per student to implement reform than urban schools (see Figure 4).

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Introduction

In November 1997, the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program was signed into law. Co-authored by Congressmen David Obey and John Porter, this legislation was designed to provide support for a new, comprehensive approach to school reform. A major application of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program has been to provide incentives for high poverty schools to pursue reform. According to the CSRD Web site, "The CSRD program is increasing the quality and accelerating the pace of school-wide reforms in high poverty and low achieving schools, especially schools receiving Title I" (Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program, 2000).

In fiscal years 1998 and 1999, the Comprehensive School Reform program made $145 million per year available to states on a formula basis to help schools pursue comprehensive reform over a three-year period. The program allocated money to states to conduct competitions to award grants to schools for the purpose of implementing comprehensive school reform. A total of $120 million dollars per year, or 83% of the total funds, was made available to states to target Title I schools serving disadvantaged students. An additional $25 million per year also was made available to states for competitive awards to all schools regardless of Title I eligibility. This $25 million was allocated from the Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE). New awards being made from fiscal year 2000 funds are not reflected in this report.

Because CSRD is a discretionary program at the state level, state educational agencies have pursued a wide range of strategies for funding the Title I schools and other schools in their state. Some states gave priority to low performing schools, targeting Title I schools that showed little or no improvement on standardized tests. Other states have given priority to high poverty schools. The size of grant awards can vary across states and schools. The legislation requires states to award a minimum of $50,000 in annual support to each grantee school. Some states have provided $50,000 to all grantees, regardless of number of students, while others offered awards of various sizes.

There are already over 1,700 schools participating in CSRD across the nation. More than 85% of the CSRD schools receive Title I funds and almost two thirds (1,128 out of 1,748) of all CSRD schools are Title I Schoolwide Program grantees (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000). Title I Schoolwide schools have a student poverty rate of 50% or higher (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965). About two thirds of the schools that have received CSRD funds are elementary schools, and the remaining one third are middle and high schools. The average poverty level of schools receiving CSRD funds is 70%, indicating that this program has been successful at reaching high poverty schools (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000).

There has been a great deal of interest in generating information about rural school participation in the CSRD program. Previous research suggests that rural schools do not participate in federal programs at the same rate as urban and suburban schools because of a

lack of staff resources and grant writing experience (Bok, 1995). However, until this date there have been few descriptive data to examine the rate at which rural schools are receiving funds from the CSRD program. Using data from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) database on school participation in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program, we can examine the rate at which rural schools have been funded compared to schools in other geographic areas.

Unique Issues Faced by Rural Schools

In January 1999, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National Rural Education Association (NREA) held a forum titled Challenges for Implementation of Comprehensive School Reform for Rural Schools. A nationally representative, geographically diverse group of rural school leaders was asked to brainstorm on the planning needs, implementation, and evaluation issues of comprehensive school reform. This group identified several issues that can pose barriers to rural school participation in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program. See Appendix A for a detailed outline of these issues. The participants in this focus group suggested that rural schools were not participating in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program at the rate they should be, and that rural schools were less likely to have staff to write grant applications, less likely to know about reform efforts, and less likely to have the depth of staff necessary to carry out reform efforts.

In November 1999, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and the Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) held a meeting for a group of comprehensive school reform model developers. At this meeting, different model developers discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with working with rural schools. Several model developers identified positive aspects of working with rural schools. Because rural school districts have smaller staffs, in many cases it is easier to have access to a school superintendent or principal than it would be in a larger district. Several model developers stated that they felt that rural schools were very enthusiastic about participating, and that there was a high level of buy-in at these rural schools. They also identified challenges to working with rural schools. Some model developers stated that they observed high staff turnover in the rural schools they worked in. Several developers felt that in many of the rural districts they have worked in, there aren't enough people to do the hard work of reform and that small staff size and lack of staff expertise are problems. They also identified the problems of less depth of staff and of a lack of resources. In some cases, rural schools lacked access to technology, especially the technology infrastructure needed for Internet connectivity. In other cases, however, schools appear to have high quality technology resources, both hardware and software. Several of the model developers also mentioned that they encountered travel difficulties when serving some rural schools. Especially when the rural schools were remote and isolated, it was expensive and time consuming to travel to the school site. In some cases, model developers encouraged rural schools to form "clusters" so that a group of schools could be served more easily.

The information gathered from the AASA NREA focus group and the meeting of model developers is anecdotal, and cannot be used to prove or disprove the prevalence of barriers to rural school participation in school reform initiatives. Many of the barriers identified by the focus group may not be unique to rural schools, and may be mitigated by the fact the CSRD is a school-based program. This information from the focus group, however, can be useful to guide the design of future studies about the potential barriers to rural school participation in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program or other school reform programs. While there has not been a study to assess the severity or prevalence of these barriers to participation, we can assess the extent to which rural schools have been funded equitably by the CSRD program. This can be done by examining the SEDL CSRD Awards Database.

Study Methodology

For the purposes of this study, the U.S. Department of Education Locale Codes are used to identify the geographic location of schools (see Appendix B for a discussion of Locale Codes, also known as Johnson Codes). According to the Locale Codes, schools located in rural communities of 2,500 people or less are considered "rural" and are coded with a "7." Many other researchers consider schools located in communities of 25,000 or less, not in a Metropolitan Statistical Area, to be rural. These schools are coded with a Locale Code of "6" and are termed "Small Town" schools. There continues to be a great deal of debate surrounding the definition of rural areas and rural schools (see Elder 1992). For the purposes of this study, we provide the data disaggregated by Locale Code so that readers can examine the two groups of schools that may be considered rural: schools coded with a "7," termed "rural schools;" and schools coded with a "6," termed "small town schools." Although this study also presents information about schools in urban fringe and town areas, the analysis is focused on rural and urban comparisons and does not attempt to draw conclusions about schools in other areas.

The main data set used for this analysis was collected by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory on school participation in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program. This data set provides a list of the schools that have received funds to implement CSRD, their state locations, the amount of funds received, the models implemented, Title I status, and their Locale Code. This data set includes all CSRD grants that have been awarded to schools by states as of January 31, 2000. This database includes information about schools from every state, and has the most up-to-date information on program participation available. This data set was merged with the Common Core of Data to obtain school-level information on student body size and poverty status (as measured by participation in Free and Reduced Lunch) by matching National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) district code and school name.

Another main data set used for this analysis is the Common Core of Data maintained by NCES. School-level data for the 1995-96 school year, were examined for all regular schools listed with "open" status. The Locale Codes were used to estimate the number of schools in each geographic location. The Common Core of Data 95-96 was used to estimate the number of students at each school. The number of students served by the CSRD program was generated from the Common Core of Data data set by summing the total number of students per CSRD school for each Locale Code. The proportion of students served by the CSRD program for each Locale Code was then calculated by dividing the number of CSRD students for each Locale Code by the total number of CSRD students. This proportion was then compared to the proportion of students represented in each Locale Code in all schools.

Because of missing Locale Code data, missing student size data, and other missing data, the linked data set containing both the SEDL school funding data and the Common Core of Data variables is incomplete. For example, Locale Codes are not available for schools or districts in Puerto Rico from the Common Core of Data and therefore these schools are not included in the analysis. The data on Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools in the Common Core of Data is incomplete, and therefore these schools were not included in the analysis. The merged data set includes 1,607 schools out of the total 1,748 schools listed in the SEDL data set.

Because the majority of CSRD funds target schools receiving Title I funds, this study focuses on high poverty schools. High poverty schools represent an estimation of the CSRD eligible schools. In this study, school-level participation in Free and Reduced Lunch was used to estimate the poverty status of children in a school. This study operationalized the measure of "high poverty" schools as schools with more than 50% of children receiving Free or Reduced Lunch; this level is the threshold for eligibility in the Title I Schoolwide Program (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965), and participation in the Free and Reduced Lunch program is frequently used as a proxy for child poverty. The universe of schools with more than 50% of children receiving Free or Reduced Lunch as identified by the Common Core of Data was then compared against CSRD schools found in the SEDL database. Several states (AL, AZ, IL, KY, MA, NM, PA, SD, TN, and WA) do not provide information on Free and Reduced Lunch participation; school-level poverty for these states was generated from 1995 school district poverty data generated by the U.S. Bureau of the Census small area data estimates (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). By these means, the study was able to consider whether the CSRD program is equitably serving high poverty schools across the rural-urban continuum.

By comparing the distribution of schools participating in CSRD to the distribution of all schools across the rural-urban continuum, we can generate information about whether rural high poverty schools are being funded by this federal program at a rate that would be expected given their numbers in the overall population. Using the data from the SEDL data set and the Common Core of Data, a series of questions were examined. These questions are answered in the following section.

Study Findings

The merged database of CSRD schools was examined with a variety of research questions. This section is organized into several parts, each addressing a different research question. Because these data are being used to examine a complex set of issues, every effort is taken to provide as much information as possible for each question.

Question 1: What are the numbers of rural, suburban, and urban schools participating in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program?

Table 1
Number of Schools Participating in the CSRD Program by Locale Code

Schools for Which Locale Code Data Are Available		
Locale Code[1]	Location	Number of Schools participating in CSRD
1	Large central city	460
2	Midsize central city	365
3	Urban fringe of a large city	222
4	Urban fringe of a midsize city	104
5	Large town	30
6	Small town	174
7	Rural	308
	Number of Schools Included in Analysis	1663
Other Schools Funded by CSRD (from SEDL Data set)		
BIA and Puerto Rico		66
Schools with Missing Data		19
	Total Schools in SEDL Data set	1748
Data Source: SEDL data set on CSRD participation, last update 1/31/00 Note: BIA schools and schools located in Puerto Rico are not included in this analysis because the Common Code of Data does not supply Locale Codes or complete data for these jurisdictions.		

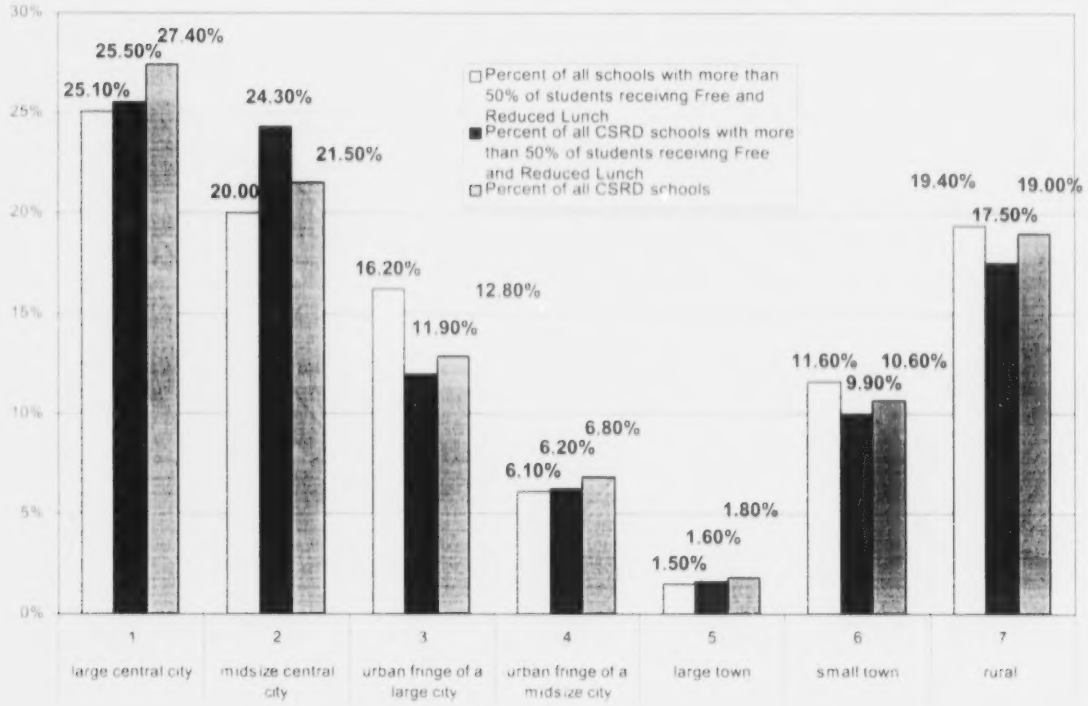
Table 1 displays the number of schools participating in the CSRD program by Locale Code. Locale Codes 1 and 2 had the most schools, respectively, while Locale Code 7 was the third-largest group of schools.

[1] See Appendix B for a definition of each Locale Code.

Question 2: How is the CSRD program serving high poverty schools (schools with 50% or more of their students participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch program) across the rural-urban continuum?

Figure 1 indicates that 25.10% of all schools with 50% or more of their students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch (high poverty schools) are located in large central cities. More than 25 percent (25.50%) of all high poverty CSRD schools are located in large central cities. More than 27 percent (27.40%) of all CSRD schools are located in large central cities.

Figure 1
CSRD Schools Compared to All High Poverty Schools by Locale Code



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More than 19 percent (19.40%) of all the high poverty schools are located in rural areas. While 17.50% of all high poverty CSRD schools are located in rural areas, 19.00% of all CSRD schools are located in rural areas. When looking only at high poverty schools, it appears that rural schools are being funded at a slightly lower rate than the rural proportion of all schools. Approximately 2% fewer rural schools are funded than their proportion in the overall population (19.40% compared to 17.50%). When looking at all schools served by the CSRD program, however, this difference declines substantially, and the findings suggest that approximately .4% fewer rural schools are being served than their proportion in the overall population (19.40% compared to 19.00%). It appears that .4% more students in urban schools are being served by the CSRD program than the proportion of large central city high poverty schools in the overall population (25.10% compared to 25.50%). These differences are not large enough to suggest that rural and urban schools are being funded at inequitable rates.

Question 3: How is the CSRD program serving students in high poverty schools (schools with 50% or more of their students participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch program) across the rural-urban continuum?

Figure 2
Students in CSRD Schools Compared to Students in All High Poverty Schools by Locale Code

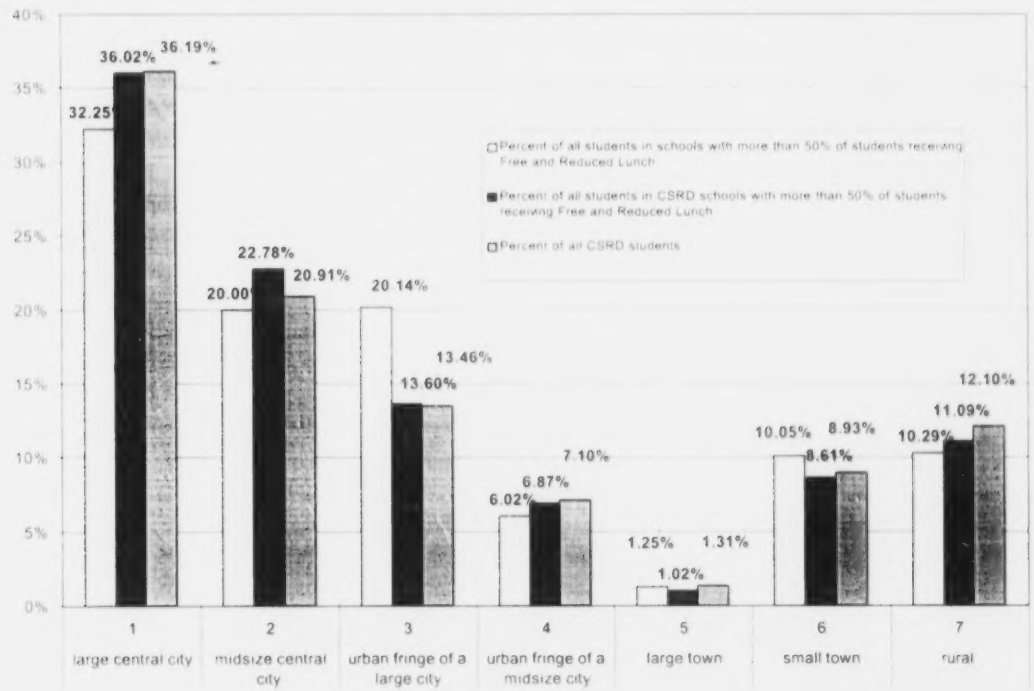

Figure 2 indicates that 32.25% of all students from schools with 50% or more of their students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch (high poverty schools) are located in large central cities. More than 36 percent (36.02%) of all students from high poverty CSRD schools are located in large central cities; 36 percent (36.19%) of all students from all CSRD schools are located in large central cities; and 10 percent (10.29%) of all students from high poverty schools are located in rural areas. More than 11 percent (11.09%) of all students from high poverty CSRD schools are located in rural areas, and 12.10% of all students from all CSRD schools are located in rural areas.

When looking at students in high poverty schools, it appears that the CSRD program is serving rural students at a slightly higher rate than their proportion in the overall population. Nearly 1% more rural students are being served than the rural proportion of all students (10.29% compared to 11.09%). Approximately 4% more students in large central city schools are being served than would be expected given their numbers in the overall population (32.25% compared to 36.02%). These differences are not large enough to suggest that rural and urban schools are being funded at inequitable rates. The student data are different than the school data because rural CSRD schools have a higher average number of students per school than rural non-CSRD schools. Thus, when all the rural CSRD students are summed, it adds up to a greater proportion of all the students.

Question 4: What is the distribution of grants to schools across the rural-urban continuum by dollar amount? How does this compare to the average dollar amount received per student?

Figure 3 shows that 40.51% of all the grants over $100,000 went to schools located in large central city areas. Large central city areas also received 25.00% of all the grants between $55,001 and $100,000. Rural areas were most likely to receive grants with the minimum amount of funding, less than $55,000. Rural schools do tend to have a slightly higher amount of funding per student (see also Figure 4).

While these findings are not surprising given the fact that large central city CSRD schools are more likely to have a greater number of students (see Figure 4) and thus potentially a greater expense for implementing school reform, it is difficult to make any inferences from these figures. Because the CSRD program is discretionary at the state level, there are many causal factors related to the distribution of grants and grant size including state policy, school size, and other factors. See Table 2 for an illustration of the variability in grant sizes to schools.

Figure 3
Distribution of Grant Amounts to Schools Compared to Average Dollar Amount Per Student by Locale Code

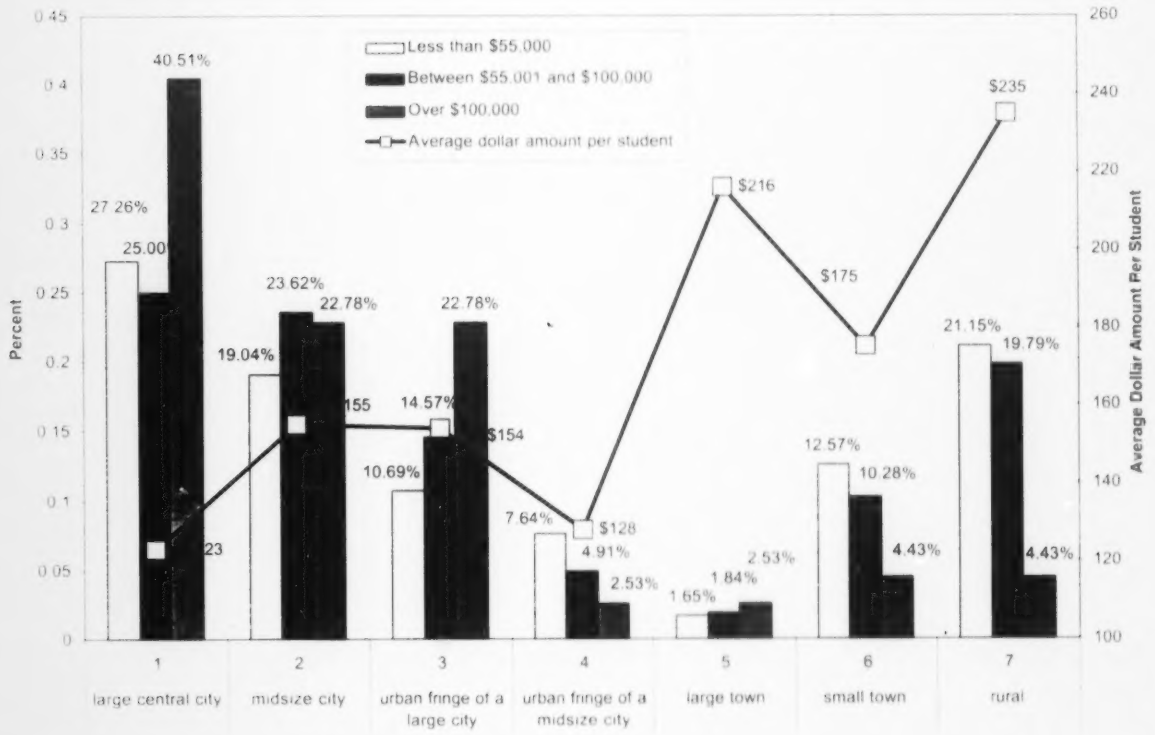

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Table 2 displays the average CSRD grant size to schools, as well as the standard deviation and minimum and maximum grant sizes for each Locale Code. As can be seen from this table, there is a great range in the size of grants to schools. As mentioned earlier, this variability in grant sizes is due to different state funding decisions regarding CSRD, differing school sizes, and other factors.

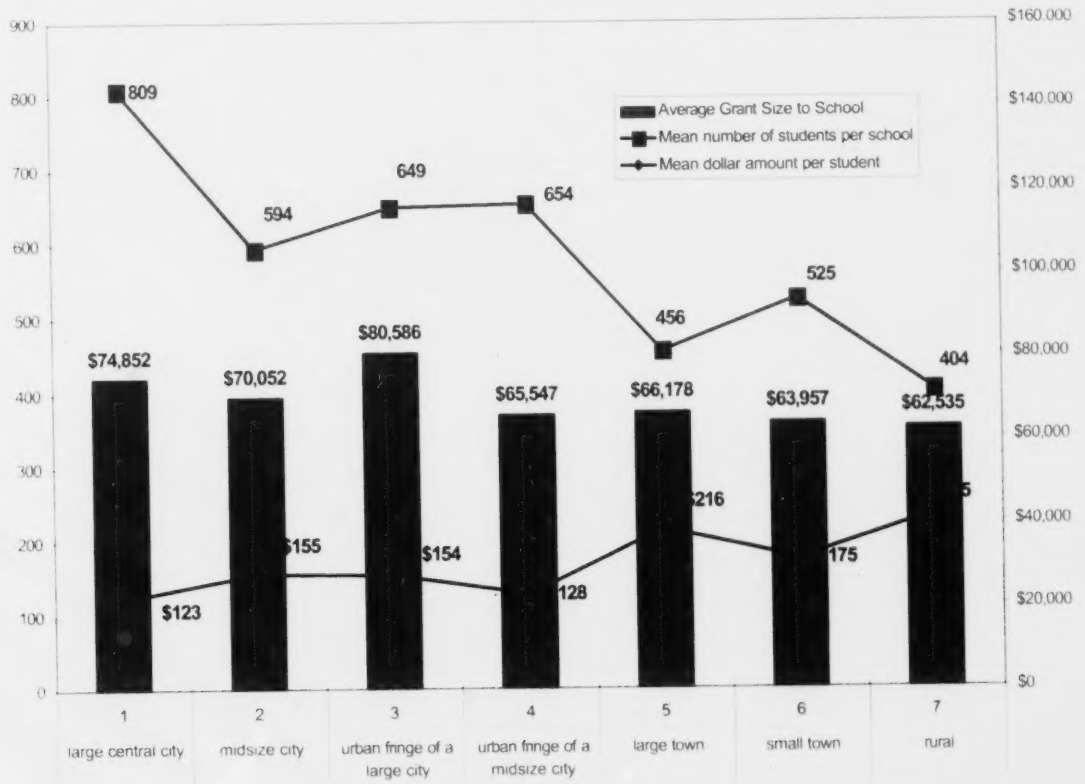
Table 2
Grant Size to Schools by Locale Code

Locale Code	Location	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1	Large central city	$ 74,852	$ 42,945	$ 50,000	$ 358,600
2	Midsize central city	$ 70,052	$ 28,587	$ 50,000	$ 267,960
3	Urban fringe of a large city	$ 80,586	$ 53,822	$ 50,000	$ 440,000
4	Urban fringe of a midsize city	$ 65,547	$ 58,155	$ 50,000	$ 600,160
5	Large town	$ 66,178	$ 23,506	$ 50,000	$ 129,648
6	Small town	$ 63,957	$ 24,359	$ 50,000	$ 213,180
7	Rural	$ 62,535	$ 16,812	$ 50,000	$ 150,000

Question 5: What is the average number of students in a CSRD school, the average grant size per school, and the average dollar amount per student across the rural-urban continuum?

Figure 4 demonstrates that the average CSRD school located in a large central city had 809 students and received $123.00 per student in award funds. The average CSRD school located in a rural area had 404 students and received $235.00 per student in award funds. These data demonstrate that the average rural CSRD school serves fewer students than the average large central city CSRD school, but has more money per student. It is difficult to make any inferences from these figures, however. Because the CSRD program is discretionary at the state level, there are many causal factors related to the distribution of grants and grant size including state policy, school size, and other factors. See Tables 3 and 4 for an illustration of the variability of school size and award amounts per pupil.

Figure 4
Comparison of Average Number of Students per CSRD School and Average Funding per Student in CSRD Schools



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Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate the range of school size and the range of funding per pupil for each Locale Code. Table 3 displays the average size of schools, as well as the standard deviation and minimum and maximum school size for each Locale Code. As can be seen from this table, there is a great range in the size of schools receiving funding from the CSRD program.

Table 3
Number of Students in CSRD Schools by Locale Code

Locale Code	Location	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1	Large central city	809	542	44	4086
2	Midsize central city	594	394	50	3398
3	Urban fringe of a large city	649	413	103	2928
4	Urban fringe of a midsize city	654	351	87	2223
5	Large town	456	226	103	1082
6	Small town	525	286	55	1916
7	Rural	404	241	54	1853

Table 4 displays the average amount of grant money per student spent at CSRD schools, as well as the standard deviation and minimum and maximum amount of money spent per student for each Locale Code. As can be seen from this table, there is a great range in the amount of funds spent per pupil at CSRD schools. Again, this is partially due to the fact that this is a state discretionary program, and therefore grants sizes and award criteria for schools vary from state to state. This variability in grant size must be kept in mind when attempting to generalize about average grant size to schools.

Table 4
Average Amount of Grant Money per Student by Locale Code

Locale Code	Location	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1	Large central city	$ 122.85	$ 106.04	$ 15.85	$1,598.86
2	Midsize central city	$ 155.22	$ 103.91	$ 16.89	$1,000.00
3	Urban fringe of a large city	$ 154.27	$ 97.59	$ 17.08	$ 728.16
4	Urban fringe of a midsize city	$ 128.27	$ 97.63	$ 30.14	$ 574.71
5	Large town	$ 216.03	$ 222.22	$ 51.66	$1,044.30
6	Small town	$ 175.08	$ 170.54	$ 31.32	$1,425.59
7	Rural	$ 234.79	$ 203.63	$ 38.40	$1,310.81

Conclusion

Because the CSRD program targets high poverty schools, it is useful to compare the distribution of the population of high poverty schools to the distribution of all CSRD schools (Figures 1 and 2). Figure 1 suggests that rural high poverty schools are being served by the CSRD program at a slightly lower rate than their proportion in the overall population of high poverty schools. Figure 2 suggests that rural students are being served by the CSRD program at a slightly higher rate than their proportion in the overall population of high poverty schools. Because this data set provides information from only the first phase of funding, it is not yet determinant of a trend. The finding of a small difference in funding rates suggests the need for further research into potential barriers that rural schools may be facing, but does not provide clear evidence of any inequity in funding across the rural-urban continuum.

The finding that central city schools receive larger grants (Figure 3) is not surprising given the fact that large central city CSRD schools are more likely to have a greater number of students (see Figure 4) and thus potentially a greater expense for implementing school reform. Schools located in rural areas have more CSRD grant money per student, on average. This may be because schools located in rural areas tend to house fewer numbers of students. However, it is difficult to make many inferences from these figures. Because the CSRD program is discretionary at the state level, there are many causal factors related to the distribution of grants and grant size including state policy, school size, and other factors. There is a great range in the size of grants distributed to schools, and this makes it difficult to determine patterns in funding.

This report provides some preliminary descriptive data on school participation in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program across the rural-urban continuum. Because there are many confounding factors in the analysis, it is difficult to draw very many conclusions at this early stage beyond the findings stated in this report. However, it is possible to identify future directions for research. The following questions could be addressed with future studies:

- Is there regional variation in funding across the rural-urban continuum?
- Do these funding patterns change as the 1999 and 2000 CSRD funds continue to be awarded?
- Is there evidence that rural schools face significant barriers to applying for CSRD funds and, if so, what are they?

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Appendix A:
Issues Related to Rural School Participation in the CSRD Program

Issues Related to Rural School Participation in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program

In January 1999, AASA and NREA held a forum titled Challenges for Implementation of Comprehensive School Reform for Rural Schools. A nationally representative, geographically diverse group of rural school leaders was asked to brainstorm on the planning needs, implementation, and evaluation issues of Comprehensive School Reform. The findings listed here are a result of this focus group conducted with rural school leaders.

The issues related to rural school involvement in the CSRD program can be broken into three main categories:

i. Population Size
j. Remoteness/Isolation
k. Rural Community Issues

These issues are listed in the following table.

Table A1
Issues Related to Rural School Participation in the CSRD Program

Population Size	This includes problems related to: I. **Small staff** l. Staff may not have enough time to complete work on CSRD planning, implementation, and evaluation. m. Not having enough "depth of staff" - smaller staff, fewer people to work on projects, fewer leaders to work on projects. n. Staff already stretched by work on current projects. o. If one person leaves the district during the planning process, it is a huge setback - need a "plan B." p. Paperwork for federal grants is a huge issue - staff doesn't have time to fill it out. q. Staff may already be scrambling to respond to state-driven reforms. r. Lack of skilled grant writers to apply for outside funding. s. Feelings of inferiority because of size. II. **Lack of skilled leadership** a. Investing in making the school or district person capable of leading the planning means you are preparing the person to leave the district - person uses skills to go to a better paying district. III. **Lack of a "critical mass"** a. Small districts may need to use a consortium or cooperative approach to planning. IV. **Time** a. Lack of time for planning, implementation, evaluation. b. Staff doesn't have time to write a proposal or any other efforts because they are already being stretched in too many directions. c. Small staff is focused on teaching. V. **Other resources (money)** a. Matching dollars required to be competitive for a soft money program are not available in rural schools or district. b. The need for the program may exist, but there are no resources to seek the program. c. Administrative cost is a major issue in a small district.

Table A1 (continued)

Remoteness Isolation	This includes problems related to: I. **Staff** a. Finding and Keeping staff. b. Finding skilled staff who want to stay. c. Lack of networking among staff. II. **Information** a. Lack of information about CSRD. b. Lack of timely information - information gets there but it is too late to submit a proposal. c. Networks are not as effective at distributing information. III. **Technology** a. Lack of necessary technology.
Rural Community Issues	II. Rural schools need community input in the planning process - this takes time and effort. III. Some schools may not apply for funds for fear will push the consolidation issue. IV Parental understanding of CSRD is important - need parent and community buy-in for reform to be successful.

Appendix B:
U.S. Department of Education Locale Codes: Defining Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools

U.S. Department of Education Locale Codes:
Defining Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools

The U.S. Department of Education Locale Codes have been used for several years to identify the geographic locations of schools. The U.S. Department of Education Locale Codes classify schools based on a measure of how the school is situated in a particular location relative to urban areas, based on the school's mailing address.

The Code translations are as follows:

1. Large Central City
2. Midsize Central City
3. Urban Fringe of Large City
4. Urban Fringe of Midsize City
5. Large Town
6. Small Town
7. Rural

The definitions are as follows:

Large City: Central city of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with a population greater than or equal to 400,000 or population density greater than or equal to 6,000 people per square mile.

Midsize City: Central city of an MSA with a population less than 400,000 and a population density less than 6,000 people per square mile.

Urban Fringe of Large City: Place within an MSA of a Large Central City and defined as urban by the Census Bureau.

Urban Fringe of Midsize City: Place within an MSA of a Midsize Central City and defined as urban by the Census Bureau.

Large Town: Town not within an MSA, with a population greater than or equal to 25,000.

Small Town: Town not within an MSA and with a population less than 25,000 and greater than or equal to 2,500 people.

Rural: A place with less than 2,500 people and coded rural by the Census Bureau.

For more information on Locale Codes, consult the following publication:
Johnson, Frank. 1990. Assigning Type of Locale Codes to the 1987-88 CCD Public School Universe. National Center for Education Statistics Technical Report, Data Series: SP-CCD-87188-7.4-CS 89-194. U.S. Department of Education.